Githa Hariharan's Fiction: A Thematic Study

A
Synopsis

of the Proposed Doctoral Thesis in English to be

Submitted to

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Synopsis As Per the Proforma (Appendix – 1)

Title of the Thesis:

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Introduction:

Githa Hariharan is one of the significant Indian writers of today and is gaining increasing recognition all over the world. She was born in Coimbatore in India to a Tamil Brahmin family. She studied in the leading institutions of Mumbai, Manila, and the United States. She took her Master's degree in Communication from Fair-Field University, Connecticut, and subsequently worked briefly as a television scriptwriter in New York. She worked as an editor for Orient Longman and then became a freelancer. She won the Commonwealth's Best First Book Award in 1993. She writes a regular column for the major Indian newspaper, The Telegraph. She has written novels, short stories and stories for children too. She has co-edited a collection of short stories, *Sorry, Best Friend* and edited *A Southern Harvest*, a volume of sixteen short stories.

Githa Hariharan's works focus on the background of our times in which the misuse of religion, tradition and ethics is prevalent. Her keen observation of Hindu social life and the role and status of women and a subtle depiction of the relationships of the women of different generations are beyond comparison. The elements of myth, fables and story-telling make her works interesting. She uses both the story and the myth to enlarge the space of people's lives. The creativity of mind to make some space for self is a welcome note in Hariharan's characters.

A Brief Review of the Work Already Done in the Field:

Hariharan's fiction has been reviewed widely and largely, indicating the popularity of her works both in India and abroad. Her novels have been translated into a number of

European and South Asian languages. A number of articles have been published on Githa Hariharan. Some research papers can be seen in the series of *Indian Review of Books*, New Delhi and in the volumes of *Indian Women Novelists* edited by R.K Dhawan. Pradeep Trikha has devoted an article on Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* in *Feminism and Literature* in which he has discussed the protagonist's struggle with society and man for the sake of preserving her identity. Indira Nityanandam has also written an article on the struggle of the women characters in *The Thousand Faces of Night.* Anita Singh has contributed a paper on Hariharan's *In Times of Siege* where she has discussed almost all the aspects of the novel like various kinds of inequality and power struggle.

But it is observed that a full length study of the fiction of Githa Hariharan is not carried out by any writer in a single book form. The present project attempts to compensate this dearth in the criticism of Githa Hariharan.

Objectives:

Githa Hariharan makes the day to day life situation grand through her classic description. The themes she deals with are common but she enlarges them with the use of myth, religion and history. Her characters can be seen making arrangements for commonplace realities like attaining some position, to be able to create one's own place. This desire for identity has been highlighted by Hariharan in her fiction. The most common issues of today like deteriorating man-woman relationship, cultural and religious beliefs and superstitions have been given space in her fiction. The blending of myth, culture, religion and history together makes her writing vigorous. Despite the very common themes we find her stories new, this is her genius as a writer. To study and analyse the traits of Githa Hariharan's writing is the objective of the thesis.

Noteworthy Contribution in the Field of the Proposed Work:

To select the noteworthy contribution to Githa Hariharan's criticism is a difficult job. However, the following may be considered as outstanding contributions to the study of her art. Since they are already listed in the Bibliography only a few are mentioned below:

Indira S. "Walking the Tight Rope: A Reading of Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night.*" *Indian Women Novelists: Set III: Vol. 4*. Ed. R.K. Dhawan. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1995. 177-182. Print.

Kundu, Rama. "Githa Hariharan: Intertext, Metafiction and Her Story." *Post Independence Indian English Fiction.* Ed. Rajeshwar Mittapalli and Allesandro Monti. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2001. 179-189. Print.

Shinde, A. Jayaprakash. "The Feminine Ghosts in Githa Hariharan's *The Ghosts of Vasu Master.*" *Contemporary Indian Women Writers in English: A Feminist Perspective*. Ed. Surya Nath Pandey. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1999. 120-131. Print.

Trikha, Pradeep. "Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night*: Straight from a Woman's Life." *Feminism and Literature*. Ed. Veena Noble Dass. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1995. 169-173. Print.

Proposed Methodology:

The proposed methodology for this project is based on a brief survey of Indian English Novel with special reference to recent Indian English novelists. The analytical method will be followed. A thorough study of all the novels and short stories of Githa Hariharan will be made. In each of the chapters different aspects of her works will be dealt with. It will be a study of the quest of identity, man-woman relationship, the treatment of death, myth, religion and contemporary socio-cultural and political scene in India. To study various aspects in such detail all her works will be read and examined closely.

The documentation of the thesis will be based on Joseph Gibaldi's *MLA Hand Book for Writers of Research Papers,* VII Edition. The following books will also be referred:

Barrett, Arnaudet. *Approaches to Academic Reading and Writing*. New Delhi: Prentice Hall Publication, 1984. Print.

M. Williams, Joseph. *Style Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. New Delhi: Longman Publication, 2010. Print.

Oshima, A and Ann Hogue. *Introduction to Academic Writing*. New Delhi: Longman Publication, 1977. Print.

Anderson, Jonathan and Millicent Poole. *Assignment and Thesis Writing,* New Delhi: Wiley Publication, 2001. Print.

Expected Outcome of the Proposed Work:

The expected outcome of the project is a thesis on the achievement of Githa Hariharan as an artist. The resulting work may contain the following tentative chapterisation:

Chapter I – Introduction

A. A Survey of Indian Novel in English

This is a brief survey of Indian novel in English. Women novelists and the themes of their works will especially be emphasized.

B. Portrait of Githa Hariharan, the Artist

A life sketch of Githa Hariharan with celebration of her literary genius will be brought forth.

Chapter II – A Focus on the Quest of Identity

Githa Hariharan is a writer of substance. All her books have characters from common walks of life craving for identity. The rigorous efforts made by Hariharan's characters to search for their identities will be analysed in this chapter.

Chapter III – The Portrayal of Man-Woman Relationship

Under this heading, the much celebrated theme which occurs abundantly in Githa Hariharan's works will be discussed. The variety, the uniqueness, the commonness, the

warmth and the coldness in man-woman relationship portrayed in Githa Hariharan's works will be focused.

Chapter IV -- The Treatment of Myth and Religion

Hariharan often uses myth and folk tales. The magic and illusion of myth and religious beliefs are largely conspicuous in some books of Githa Hariharan. This chapter will be a survey of the context in her works where myth and religious beliefs are depicted. Their significance and impact on life will also be studied.

Chapter V – The Treatment of Death and Its Significance

There is a spectrum of aspects of death in Githa Hariharan's works. The realisation of the ultimate truth, death, brings many changes in her characters. The writer delves deep into the meaning of death, the consciousness of loss, and the irksome memory that accentuate this feeling. This chapter will deal with the aspirations and significance of death depicted by Hariharan through her characters.

Chapter VI – The Projection of Modern India

Githa Hariharan's fiction makes an Indian reader identify with the socio-cultural locale of her characters. She successfully unveils the stark atrocities of contemporary socio-political scene in India. *Fugitive Histories* and *In Times of Siege* are the works that make the line between fiction and non-fiction blur. The storyline and incidents are inspired by actual incidents. The issues like freedom of expression, human rights, social justice and fundamentalism have received transparent, unbiased and subtle treatment by Hariharan in these two novels. Thus India projected by Githa Hariharan will be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter VII – In Retrospect

This chapter would be a summing up of the assessment made in the earlier chapters and would conclude with Githa Hariharan's themes, language,mode of narration and craft in multi-dimensional milieu of Indian society.

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List of the Published Papers of the Candidate

"Acceptance and Non- Acceptance of Old Trends by Hariharan's 'Rukmani' and 'Revati' " -

To be published in Poetcrit, Maranda (H.P)

"Turbulence in Women Psyche in Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night"* - To be published in Literati, Raipur.

This synopsis is hereby forwarded to the Research Degree Committee for approval.

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